

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (original) A retractor comprising:
a first tissue retaining wall coupled to a first guide receiving channel; and
a second tissue retaining wall movably coupled to the first tissue retaining wall.
2. (original) The retractor of claim 1, wherein each of the retaining walls has a substantially flat side.
3. (original) The retractor of claim 1, wherein the first and second retaining walls are nested relative to one another.
4. (original) The retractor of claim 1, wherein at least one of the retaining walls has a curved bottom edge.
5. (original) The retractor of claim 1, wherein at least one of the retaining walls has a compliant bottom edge.
6. (original) The retractor of claim 1, further comprising a hinge that couples the first and second retaining walls.
7. (original) The retractor of claim 1, further comprising a frame having a mechanism that holds the retaining walls apart from each other.
8. (original) The retractor of claim 1, wherein the first guide receiving channel comprises a slot.
9. (currently amended) The retractor of claim 8, further including a frame and a second guide receiving channel, wherein both of the guide receiving channels are disposed in the frame.
10. (original) The retractor of claim 9, wherein at least one of the guide receiving channels is slotted.

11. (original) The retractor of claim 1, wherein at least a portion of the retractor is substantially transparent.
12. (original) The retractor of claim 1, further comprising a web that couples distal portions of the retaining walls.
13. (original) The retractor of claim 1, further comprising a plurality of removable finger processes extending from distal portions of the first retaining wall.
14. (original) A retractor system comprising a retractor according to claim 1, and a first guide sized and dimensioned at one end to be received within the first guide receiving channel, and at another end to be inserted into a first area of bone.
15. (original) The retractor system of claim 14, wherein the first guide is held in place with respect to the bone by a screw.
16. (currently amended) The retractor system of claim 14, further comprising a frame and a clamp or nut that cooperates with the first guide to assist in holding the frame in position relative to the bone.
17. (original) The retractor system of claim 14, wherein the retractor has a second guide receiving channel spaced apart from the first guide receiving channel, and further comprising a second guide sized and dimensioned at one end to be received within the second guide receiving channel, and at another end to be inserted into a second area of bone.
18. (original) The retractor system of claim 17, wherein the second guide is held in place with respect to the bone by a second screw.
19. (original) The retractor system of claim 14, further comprising an expander having a handle and sloped walls.
20. (currently amended) A method of inserting a tissue retractor into a patient, comprising:

providing a retractor having paired tissue retracting surfaces and first and second guide receiving areas;

percutaneously implanting first and second guides into areas of different areas of bone in the patient;

~~then~~ positioning upper ends of the first and second guides through the first and second guide receiving areas, respectively, thereby inserting the retractor into tissue of the patient; and

moving the tissue retracting surfaces apart from one another independently of the first and second guides.

21. (original) The method of claim 20, wherein the step of implanting comprises screwing the first guide into a pedicle of a vertebra.

22. (original) The method of claim 20, wherein the step of implanting comprises inserting the first and second guides into different bones.

23. (original) The method of claim 20, further comprising stabilizing the retractor on the guides using a wire.